Petru Loga

THE CHURCH

THE BODY OF CHRIST

”I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:18)

„And He is the head of the body, the church." (Colossians 1:18)

"Now ye are the body of Christ, and
members in particular."

(1 Corinthians 12:27)

„To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery,
which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in
God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent
that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly
places might be known by the church the
manifold wisdom of God," (Ephesians 3:9-10)

Alba Iulia 2024
ISBN 978-615-82447-6-3

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The Church today

For many of us, the Church of Christ no longer fulfills the purpose given by God. It is easy to observe how we have adopted from one another the idea that what is generically called "the Church" is the place where people with common religious interests gather.

We have been taught to believe that it is the place where people sing, pray, attend a religious program, and socialize a little after the service ends, then each returns to their personal concerns and interests. Thus, for many, the Church has come to be merely a place to find inner peace that is lost during the week due to a busy lifestyle.

The vast majority of members are in the position of being spectators at these religious programs, their service consisting of being present/sitting in the pews and contributing a certain amount of money for the needs of the congregation. A very small portion of the members are responsible for carrying out *this program*.

As a result, we have come to believe that after being born again, God is somewhere far away and does not get too involved in a person's life. And the majority of us remain at this initial part. We went to church, had our seat, confessed our sins, were baptized, sang, supported the teachings of the church we belong to, being convinced that in this way we will enter the Kingdom of God.

So, in these gatherings, the ordinary member is just a consumer; he has nothing to do, attending the assembly being his only duty. In most large congregations, members know each other only by sight.

Because of these teachings, many of those on the membership list no longer attend these programs, and the buildings are quite empty during certain worship services.

In many congregations, there is a major gap between the membership list and those who actually attend the worship programs. This has led us to believe that it is normal for many in the congregation not to attend services for months or years and yet remain on the membership list.

From what we see today almost everywhere, we observe that Satan has succeeded in distorting the role of the Church – the significance of the Body of Christ. Through the false teaching that "salvation is limited only to the forgiveness of sins" (a teaching that lies at the foundation of the major religious organizations), he has deceived people into thinking that discipleship and the school of Christ are unnecessary.

Most of us were taught that God did everything for us, that through faith in the sacrifice on the cross we obtain salvation, which consists of the forgiveness of sins. We were taught that it is not possible to achieve character perfection, that no

one can add anything to the work of salvation accomplished at the cross.

Through this false teaching, the goal was to eliminate discipleship and the importance of Christ's school (the Church), deceiving people into thinking that these are not part of the plan of salvation. Satan has worked intensely to prevent people from understanding the role of the Body of Christ in the work of growing and perfecting the saints.

The doctrine that reduces salvation to the mere forgiveness of sins has led many to no longer value the Body of Christ. Those who have received this teaching have had their eyes closed to the role of the Church and have come to no longer see the need for the Body of Christ and for the members to whom to be closely connected.

This is the situation of both those who are on the membership lists of congregations that are limited to worship programs, and those who have chosen to live out their faith life alone. (*And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. Ezekiel 34:5*)

Both of these situations are very dangerous, because they are, in fact, a rejection of Christ's work regarding the growth/building of the members in His Church, in His Body. (He gave Himself for her, to sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word, that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. Ephesians 5:25-27; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Ephesians 2:21-22)

On the foundation of this false teaching, Satan has succeeded in deceiving people into thinking that "the Church" is nothing more than worship and preaching in buildings equipped with preaching halls, through which people are given only religious education.

We can easily observe that this teaching has caused discipleship to Christ to become effectively nonexistent in today's religious movements, and almost no one believes anymore that they must live as a disciple in order to reach the full stature of their Teacher.

Anyone who looks more closely will see that Satan, like a great merchant, has made every effort to build a vast religious empire to keep people in darkness, so that they would not come to know the truth about the Church of Christ.

Thus, he has positioned in every country religious organizations (like networks of supermarkets) that offer people only religious programs, and he has succeeded in trapping billions of people in this snare. None of them has discipleship implemented in their doctrine – the kind of discipleship whose sole purpose is to bring people to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

If we look at these religious movements, we can easily see how successfully Satan has deceived humanity, all of them practicing this institutionalized system of worship. From Catholics, Orthodox, and historic Protestant churches like the Lutherans, to modern Evangelical and Post-Reformation movements, all follow the same organizational model, with buildings specially constructed for worship and preaching.

In this way, the Church has become merely a center for religious education, thus losing its purpose – no longer being the place appointed for the growth and perfection of the saints, which the heavenly dominions and powers look upon and marvel at. (Now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Ephesians 3:10-11)

First of all, Satan worked on replacing the spiritual fathers/shepherds, who were entrusted with raising their children (disciples). These have been replaced by pastors or preaching leaders — ministers dedicated only to worship programs, whose responsibility is limited to religious education and maintaining the flock in a scattered form, rather than raising the children. (The wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. John 10:12)

Thus, the one who desires to live out the life of discipleship in a practical way – which involves a child-parent relationship – will find themselves in the absurd situation of not being able to find a single spiritual parent.

This happens because today, in these religious organizations, spiritual fathers are entirely absent, fathers like the apostle Paul was to Timothy, Titus, Onesimus, as well as for many others. They have been replaced with preaching pastors, committee members, youth leaders... (see Paul's epistle to Timothy, Titus, Philemon)

For those who accept the model of church with religious programs, the true Church – in which the members are closely connected to each other, and which altogether form the Body of Christ – remains a great mystery. For those who remain within this pattern, the Church as described in the Holy Scriptures has no practical applicability. (This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:32)

The question we each need to ask ourselves is: What mystery does the Church hide? For whom is it a mystery? Is it for us too?

The Church - The Body of Christ

In order to understand God's eternal plan concerning Christ and His Church, we must carefully examine what the Scripture says about it. God's plan for the newborn is to raise him, perfect him, and to make him like Christ. And He

accomplishes this through His Word, through the Holy Spirit, and with the help of the members, who are part of the Body of Christ. This project was established in eternity in Christ Jesus. (According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Ephesians 3:11)

God's plan concerning the Body of Christ is focused on our growth and on reaching the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ! (And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; **For the perfecting of the saints... till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ**. Ephesians 4:11-13)

If we pay attention, we can easily observe that no one who turns to God possesses the Fruit of the Spirit from the beginning – namely long-suffering, gentleness, love... These qualities must be obtained through God's work with man. In this work, we have at our disposal the Word of Scripture, which works with us, the Holy Spirit, who also works, and the **Church**, which is the **Body of Christ.**

To better understand the role of the Church in our growth and perfection, we will highlight several verses from the Holy Word that show God's involvement in the Church, which is the Body of Christ.

1. "I will build My church..." (Matthew 16:18)

2. "And He is the head of the body, the church." (Colossians 1:18)

3. "Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular." (1 Corinthians 12:27)

4. "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church." (Ephesians 5:29)

5. "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for His body's sake, which is the church." (Colossians 1:24)

The Church is identified as the body of Christ. He is the Head of the Body, and the people born of God's seed are its members. (And He is the head of the body, the church. Colossians 1:18; Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular. 1 Corinthians 12:27)

Christ is the head of the body, the Church

God is the one who forms the Body of Christ, and its functioning is similar to that of the human body. (But God hath tempered the body together. 1 Corinthians 12:24) He places in the Body of Christ only members who have life from above – those who are born again. (And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved. Acts 2:47)

He begins His work with us, and if we remain obedient, He will bring it to

completion. (Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Phil. 1:6)

He has promised that He will be with us every day, never leaving us for a moment. He will take us by the hand and walk with us to the end of the journey. (And, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Matthew 28:20; For he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Hebrews 13:5)

The Scripture shows us the relationship/connection that must exist between the members of the Church of Christ/His Body:

- They are closely joined to one another. (From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4:16)

- They do not live for themselves. (For none of us liveth to himself. Romans 14:7)

- They are members of one another. (So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Romans 12:5)

- Each seeks the good of the others. (But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 1 Corinthians 12:7; Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. 1 Corinthians 10:24)

- They care for one another. (But God hath tempered the body together... that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 1 Corinthians 12:24, 25)

- They submit to one another. (Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Ephesians 5:21)

- In humility, each considers the other more important than themselves. (Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Philippians 2:3)

- They bear one another's burdens. (Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2)

– The greatest among them is the servant of all. (But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. Matthew 23:11)

– They watch over one another. (And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. Hebrews 10:24)

In the Body of Christ, we bear one another's burdens, thus fulfilling the law of Christ.

– They watch to ensure that no one is worldly or tolerates evil. (Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person. Hebrews 12:16)

– They love one another as Christ loved them. (Love one another, as I have loved you. John 15:12)

Only within the Church can we experience these kinds of relationships,

which are essential for our growth until we all reach maturity – the full measure of the stature of Christ. (Ephesians 4:13)

Questions:

– Do we find ourselves in a Body that is closely joined and well-knit? (Ephesians 4:16)
– Are we in the Body/Family for the benefit of the other members? (1 Corinthians 10:24)
– To whom are we closely joined, whose burdens are we carrying? (Galatians 6:2)
– Do we live in submission to Christ and to other members? (Ephesians 5:21)
– Do we watch over one another so that there is no worldly person among us? (Hebrews 12:16)

The School of Christ

The Holy Scripture describes the Church of Christ as a family, with infants, children, and parents, where we live in close connection with one another and grow to become like the Lord. (I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto you, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father. 1 John 2:13)

Christ is the head of this Family, the Church, and He lovingly cares for it. (For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. Ephesians 5:29)

He does not abandon His newborns and will not let them grow up without help. The one born of God is placed in the family and in the school of Christ, to grow as a disciple until he reaches the stature of a perfect or mature man, to the measure of the stature of His fullness. (And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints... till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. Ephesians 4:11-13)

The Church, or the Body of Christ, is the most efficient factory that could ever exist. Its only purpose is to bring man to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

The principalities and powers in heavenly places, when they look at the life of the Church, see how great God's wisdom is. (To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. Ephesians 3:10-11)

In the Church, we learn self-denial, humility, godliness; we learn to offer ourselves as servants or slaves to Christ; we learn to live in righteousness, as He lived.

In His family, we are taught and helped to live as He lived, because only in this way will His character traits be imprinted upon us – namely long-suffering, kindness, gentleness, love... and this can only be done in His school, which is the Church. (He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. 1 John 2:6)

Upon closer look, we can easily observe that all the things related to man's salvation – from the new birth until we reach the stature of a mature or perfect man – are astonishingly similar to the things we encounter in this short life on earth.

At birth, we witness the coming of a child into the world, which is very similar to being born again in the Kingdom of God. (For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me. 1 Corinthians 4:15-16)

The natural infant cannot choose in which family to grow up; those from whom he was born will be his family. For growth, the natural infant is fed with mother's milk. Everything is absolutely new for the newborn child. He absorbs everything he sees and hears from his parents.

So it is with the one born again – he is in a family with spiritual parents (the Body of Christ, which is the Church) who feed him with spiritual milk as a baby. (And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat. 1 Corinthians 3:1-2)

He assimilates everything he sees and hears from his spiritual parents. (Ye know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children. 1 Thessalonians 2:11)

A little later, the natural child is enrolled in school and, after some time, graduates... In this world, we cannot imagine someone becoming a doctor without attending medical school and without teachers.

The same must happen with the spiritual child. You cannot reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ without being a disciple in His school. (But when divers were hardened, and believed not, but spake evil of that way before the multitude, he departed from them, and separated the **disciples**, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. Acts 19:9)

God causes us to be born again, gives us the Holy Spirit to guide us, and places us in His school where we have spiritual parents and teachers, to raise us according to the standard of His Kingdom.

He has given us everything we need to reach the stature for which we were

created. (From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. Eph. 4:16)

This school of disciples has one single purpose: that the disciple may come to be like the Teacher. **We all must go through this school**, whose final goal is to form the image of His Son in us. (The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. Luke 6:40)

The Son of God was sent by the heavenly Father to earth to establish the Church, which is the Body of Christ. He is the founder of the school of disciples, of the Church which He lovingly cares for. (I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18; For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. Ephesians 5:29)

The Lord Jesus made disciples, then sent them into all the world, so that they, in turn, may make other disciples and enroll in the school of Christ those who desire to enter this school. (Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Matthew 28:19-20)

We can take the Lord's disciples as examples, but especially the apostle Paul. He dedicated his entire life to serving the Church of Christ.

He made disciples whom he taught in order to present them before God as perfect disciples in Christ. (Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. Colossians 1:28-29)

Only in His school can the relationships between disciples be adjusted until they reach full maturity and unity in all things – a unity that will also be found in His eternal Kingdom. (That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. John 17:21)

Man must go through various trials so that, throughout the course of the school, he may acquire the character traits of the Lord Jesus, in order to be found worthy to dwell with God and with all those who have graduated from this school of disciples and who have His traits imprinted in their character.

We will take as an example long-suffering. How can we come to have it imprinted in our character?

To begin with, we will learn and internalize the Lord's teaching on non-resistance, and then, when trials come upon us, we will put it into practice by walking in the footsteps of our spiritual fathers, who themselves walk in the footsteps of the Lord Jesus. (And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat,

let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Matthew 5:40-41)

Each of us must pass through this school of patience, which carries out its perfect work, because only in this way can our character be perfected. (My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, **that ye may be perfect** and entire, wanting nothing. James 1:2-4)

The Role of the Members in the Body of Christ

The Church is seen by God as a family, as a school of disciples, but also as a body in which those born of Him are members of the Body of Christ – similar to the human body, which we all know is made up of many members closely joined together. (From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4:16)

God places the members in the Body of Christ similarly to how He placed them in the human body; the heart in its place, the pancreas in its place, the fingernail in its place, each with its own function. (But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 1 Corinthians 12:18)

God does not place any member to grow outside the body, because separated from the body, it can have neither life nor growth. Take the kidneys, for example – they cannot live outside the body. They are in the body, closely connected to other members, from which they receive and to which they give further.

When it comes to the human body, it is quite simple. The life of a member is strictly tied to the life of the body. There are no living members that exist on their own outside the body.

It is the same with the members of the Body of Christ. No member can grow on its own, outside the Body of Christ. Whoever believes they can grow without the Body and still reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ is deceiving themselves. (Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility...And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of

No member can grow by itself outside of the body!

God. Colossians 2:19)

The human body, just like the Body of Christ, was designed so that each part of the body may serve another part, and no member exists only for itself. (For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Romans 12:4-5; For none of us liveth to himself. Romans 14:7)

The members of the Body of Christ care for one another; each lives for the benefit of the others. (God hath tempered the body together…that there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. 1 Corinthians 12:24-26)

In the Body of Christ, we are closely connected to the members next to us, who in turn are connected to other members, and so on, until the whole body is tightly joined and held together. (From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4:16)

A very important thing to mention is that God is the one who arranges the body. He places the members in the body as He wills. We do not choose where we are in the body – the Lord does this.

He knows what each one needs and what each one can give. He will place each of us in such a way that we receive everything necessary for growth and maturity or perfection. (But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 1 Corinthians 12:18)

If we are infants, He will not place us merely among other infants, but next to older brothers and/or spiritual fathers through whom we will be counseled and helped to put off lying, stealing, anger, slander, the use of idle words... (And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, **able also to admonish one another**. Romans 15:14)

In this body, closely connected to other members, we learn to clothe ourselves with long-suffering, kindness… to walk in holiness, we learn to forgive, to love – in other words, we learn to walk after the new things, which are the things of the Spirit.

1. For this purpose, the Lord places spiritual fathers in His Family, to whom He entrusts children to raise and protect from ravenous wolves. (Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. Acts 20:28)

2. They are appointed to be the servants of infants and children. They must care for the members of the Church with a servant's heart, attending to each one's

needs. None can be left out. (But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. Matthew 23:11)

Just as natural parents care for all the needs of their children, so also spiritual fathers/elders will care of all the spiritual needs of the children entrusted to them. (But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children. 1 Thessalonians 2:7)

3. They will enroll them as disciples in the school of Christ, where they will teach them to obey the commandments of the Lord Jesus. (Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. Matthew 28:20) They watch over them and are attentive so that they may grow up in a healthy way. (And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works. Hebrews 10:24)

4. They will give them tasks and help them put the Lord's teachings into practice, using them in daily life so they may come to discern good from evil. (But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. Hebrews 5:14) In the Family – the Church – children will learn to give up lying, deceit, anger... to renounce the old things, the things of the world. (Colossians 3:8-15)

By following and imitating the example of their fathers who overcome trials, the children will also learn to go through the trials of faith. (Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample. Philippians 3:17)

Those who are our fathers will oversee how we apply the Lord's teaching in everyday life. When our rights or possessions are taken from us, we must follow their example and the Lord's, and live as He lived.

Also in the Family, they will learn to do good, to show kindness and mercy – by participating in various works alongside their fathers – visiting orphans and widows, caring for elderly brothers and sisters in need. This may include small things like shopping, cooking, cleaning, all the way to bedside care. (I was naked and ye clothed me, I was sick, and ye visited me. Matthew 25:36)

It is important to understand the difference between education and growth under parental authority. Through preaching, we receive only teaching – not parental growth.

We can see how great the difference is when we compare an orphaned child with one who has parents. Both receive education. But the child who has parents, in addition to education, has them by his side to build his character. They will encourage him in what is good and correct him when he is wrong. In contrast, the orphaned child, if he does wrong, has no one beside him to correct him.

We must understand clearly that we will not be able to grow to reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ if we do not have spiritual parents. In

Paul's epistles to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, we find the author as an example of a spiritual father. (For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. 1 Corinthians 4:15)

Submission Just as in a natural family, for healthy growth to occur, children must be submissive to their parents in all things. (Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. 1 Peter 5:5)

Reading these epistles, we observe the relationship between Paul and his beloved children. Even though Timothy and Titus had reached spiritual maturity, they still received commands and assignments from their spiritual father. (For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee. Titus 1:5; This charge I commit unto thee, son Timothy... that thou by them mightest war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience. 1 Timothy 1:18,19)

The model of submission we must follow is given to us by the Lord Jesus. (I can of mine own self do nothing. John 5:30; He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked. 1 John 2:6)

The Scripture describes submission as full obedience, without turning to the right or to the left. (And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the LORD shall choose shall shew thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee. Thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, to the right hand, nor to the left. Deuteronomy 17:11)

Only in this way can we reach our perfection – only if we obey our superiors in all things. (Obey them that have the rule over you, **and submit yourselves**: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you. Hebrews 13:17; And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints. Ephesians 4:11-12)

Parents are those who correct and use the rod for children who go astray. (Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. 2 Timothy 4:2)

To understand how serious disobedience is, we will highlight its consequences. In ancient times, the punishment for disobedience toward those appointed to lead the people was physical death. (And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the Lord thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously. Deuteronomy 17:12-13; see the rebellion of Korah and his company.)

In the Church of Christ, things are very similar. If any member of the body

dares, out of pride, to disobey those whom the Lord has appointed to shepherd the flock, they must bear the consequence of being removed from the Body of Christ. (But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an **heathen man and a publican**. Matthew 18:17)

As for the relationship we may have with a heathen, the Scripture makes it clear through the words spoken by the apostle Peter in the house of Cornelius. (And he said unto them, Ye know how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew to keep company, or come unto **one of another nation**; but God hath shewed me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Acts 10:28)

Through the statement, "Let him be unto thee as an heathen," the Lord Jesus commands the breaking off all ties and the isolation of the one who has despised the authority appointed by God, in order to prevent the contamination of the members with the sin of rebellion and/or disregard for Church's authority. (**For they will turn away thy son from following me**, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. Deuteronomy 7:4)

In the Body of Christ, submission is mandatory. It is absolutely necessary in the process of growth, in order to reach the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:13)

We advise the reader not to desire **to be alone** or to be part of a congregation that practices only worship and preaching – to be isolated like an orphaned child – and to thus avoid the Body of Christ, which is tightly joined and held together.

Let us flee from the congregation that does not practice care and submission, that has no spiritual parents. That is the work of Satan, with which he has deceived the religious world. That is not the Body of Christ.

Let us desire to be in a body where the whole Word of Christ can be fulfilled, where each member contributes toward reaching the stature for which we were created, so that the image of Christ may be formed in us.

Questions:

– Do we have spiritual fathers who care for us? Or are we just another member – an orphaned child?

– If we have spiritual fathers, do they teach us not to resist the one who wrongs us, not to love the world, not to work under the table, to pay our taxes...?

– Do they check whether we put these things into practice? Are we rebuked if we haven't done them?

– Do they watch over us so that nothing harmful happens to us, so that we don't fall into sin? (1 Peter 5:1)

– Do we give double honor to our spiritual fathers? Are we submissive to them? (1 Timothy 5:17)

The Purity of the Body of Christ

Both in the past and today, the camp of God – the Body of Christ – must be pure, for there the Lord has His dwelling place. (The prince of this world (Satan) cometh, and hath nothing in me. John 14:30; For the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be **holy**: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee. Deuteronomy 23:14; Both male and female shall ye put out, without the camp shall ye put them; that they defile not their camps, in the **midst whereof I dwell.** Numbers 5:3)

God, who is the architect and builder of the Body – the Church – has established laws for its functioning in such a way as to keep it undefiled. Christ lovingly cares for this Body, because it is His Body! (For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. Ephesians 5:29, 30)

If a member of the Body of Christ becomes sick or defiled through carelessness and falling into temptation, the Lord Jesus, together with the members of His Body, works for the healing of the sick member.

If the sick member refuses to be cared for, in the end, it must be removed. One of the reasons for removal is that the sick member will contaminate, influence and lead into sin (through his life) those to whom he is closely connected. (Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. Hebrews 12:15; For they will turn away thy son from following me… Deuteronomy 7:4)

The Lord Jesus does not allow sin to dwell in His Body. That is why He commands His members to watch, lest there be any worldly or profane person among them. The sin or infection of one member spreads to those closely connected to it. (Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person. Hebrews 12:16; Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 1 Corinthians 5:6, 7)

Therefore, we are commanded that when we observe a sin, we must go to our brother and restore him in the spirit of meekness for his correction, and if he does not listen, he must be brought before the Church. (Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. And if he shall neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Matthew 18:15, 17)

Many may ask: how can someone sitting next to us during worship, with whom we have almost no connection and whose actions we don't even know, contaminate us?

If this is the case – if we are not truly connected to one another – then it is clear we are in a scattered flock, where Satan has done his work.

In such a place, there can be no talk of submission, rebuke, correction... there can be no talk of the Body of Christ, which was designed to function in close unity.

Each soul is responsible before God for ensuring that evil does not enter or find tolerance within the Body of Christ. If each member is closely connected to another, then it is easy to understand that when one becomes sick, it will affect the one to whom it is connected.

If a member becomes infected with the disease of slander or gossip and is not rebuked and disciplined or corrected, it will contaminate those closely connected to it. (Be not deceived: "Evil communications corrupt good manners". 1 Corinthians 15:33)

If, through lack of vigilance, the members of the body of Christ come to tolerate sin, the Church will eventually be separated from Christ. (I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Revelation 3:15, 16; And I will kill her children with death. Revelation 2:23)

When the command in Matthew 18:15 is ignored, sin multiplies, the body becomes sick, and if no steps are taken for healing, it will eventually die. (Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Ecclesiastes 8:11)

The Church in Thyatira

At the time this Church was examined, sin had entered the assembly and was being tolerated. The Church allowed a "**woman who calls herself a prophetess**" to teach heresies and deceive the Lord's servants. (But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies. 2 Peter 2:1)

We can see the Lord's care for the members of His body – first for Jezebel, to whom He gave time to repent. (And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Revelation 2:21)

Even though the Church was praised for many things, the Lord rebuked it for this sin of indifference – for tolerating sin. (I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, **because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel**, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants. Revelation 2:19, 20)

The Church was guilty of disregarding the Lord's teaching, which says that a woman is not permitted to teach others, and of the teaching that commands us to watch and not associate with anyone who – even if he calls himself a brother – lives in sin. (Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. Hebrews 12:15,16; Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to

speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law. 1 Corinthians 14:34 But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. 1 Timothy 2:12)

This leaven of sin, tolerated in the Church, was about to leaven the whole lump – that is, to bring death upon the flock. (Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 1 Corinthians 5:6; And I will kill her children with death. Revelation 2:23)

If the majority of the Church comes to tolerate sin, what should the few who still want to remain faithful to the Lord do? Can they remain in such a Church and still live according to the law of the Body of Christ, where every joint supplies its part? Does the Lord teach them to remain together with those who live in sin?

If we pay attention to the written Word and do not go beyond it, it gives us the answer to these questions. When sin is tolerated, the Lord Jesus has commands for the members who want to remain obedient to Him.

Thus, in order to remain pure and uncontaminated by the disease of sin, the Lord separates them from impurity, commanding them to come out from among them. (Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing... 2 Corinthians 6:17; For men shall be lovers of their own selves, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: **from such turn away**. 2 Timothy 3:2-5)

We warn those who choose to remain in congregations where sin is tolerated: do not deceive yourselves by taking the example of the five churches in Revelation, as if lawlessness can coexist with righteousness. The Lord tells us that Satan has nothing in Him.

The Lord cannot allow sin in His Body, but in His mercy, before cutting off or removing a branch from the vine, He first tries to heal the sick member.

We will highlight just a few sins which, if tolerated, will bring death to the assembly: disregard for authorities by breaking fiscal laws, e.g., working under the table or off the books, disobeying traffic laws, love for the things of the world, tolerance of worldliness...

Slander or backbiting, a sin so widespread today in many congregations, is just as serious in the Lord's eyes as fornication and drunkenness. The Lord commands us to have no association with those who practice it, even if they call themselves brothers. (But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be... a **railer**, or a drunkard; with such an one no not to eat. 1 Corinthians 5:11)

Another sin, which today is ignored, but just as serious – and for which we must separate from those who call themselves brothers – is self-love: brothers who do not live for the benefit of the other members. (This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be **lovers of their own selves**... having

a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. 2 Timothy 3:1-5)

Questions:

– How much time per day/week do you spend on yourself, and how much for the spiritual benefit of others? 5%, 10%...? Have I learned to live for the benefit of others?

– Can the Lord be with me if I do not separate from those who practice slander or who promote self-love?

The Scattered Flock

The Builder of the Body is the Lord Jesus. (And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18; ...nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. Ephesians 5:29)

The Lord has established laws of operation within His Body to keep it pure, closely connected, and well-knit. These are specific laws by which the members relate to one another. (That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 1 Corinthians 12:25; Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2)

Satan's activity is to find tricks by which these laws may not be put into practice, causing the flock to be scattered. (...the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. John 10:12)

Satan knows that the member or child alone cannot survive if not closely joined in the Body/Family. (And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. Ezekiel 34:5) So his major attack is to prevent the members from being closely joined to one another, which can ultimately lead to the death of the member.

The goal of our adversary is for the members to live scattered, each one for himself, and he works in various ways to bring people to a mere form of godliness, one that gives the impression of having life from above. (For men shall be lovers of their own selves... having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. 2 Timothy 3:2, 5)

The Lord Jesus warns us that ravenous wolves will enter the flock and will not spare it, their activity being one of scattering. (For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock; Acts 20:29; ...the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. John 10:12)

The devil seeks to destroy the purpose of the Body through these wolves. We are warned to beware of them, as they are very dangerous – they come dressed in sheep's clothing. (Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Matthew 7:15)

They are found everywhere: leaders of denominations, large churches, preachers, theology professors... who work to maintain a certain system of organization based solely on worship programs, which is the foundation of the scattered flock – a system that prioritizes worship over the care of the sheep. (Ye have not healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken; ...neither have ye sought that which was lost. Ezekiel 34:4)

This system of organization, with religious schools/institutions, trains and authorizes ministers – **professionals in worship and preaching**. Then, because of their positions, these ministers are compelled to teach in ways that preserve this system, resulting in a scattered flock. (I have not sent them... but they prophesy a lie in my name, that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish. Jeremiah 27:15)

By implementing this system, the work of caring for and shepherding the flock has been replaced by the work of worship. This blocks the involvement of the Holy Spirit in the care and shepherding the sheep. (Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God. Acts 20:28) As a result, in most assemblies today, brothers like **the apostle Peter** (**who was a fisherman**), who meet the criteria in **Titus chapter 1**, but lack theological education, are no longer considered suitable for this task.

Through this institutionalized model, Satan has deceived many into thinking it is not necessary for the members to live according to the law of Christ. (Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the **law of Christ**. Galatians 6:2)

If we ask for an answer to certain questions that may arise regarding our service in the Church, these teachers – specialists in scattered flocks – will, in an effort to soothe our conscience, invite us to take part in all kinds of **ministry projects or imitations**, which may seem good, but will never call us to care for one another and bear each other's burdens.

Such activities falsify the true care we are called to, the only kind that keeps the Body closely joined. (That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 1 Corinthians 12:25)

In this way, Satan prevents us from understanding that we must live a spiritual family life, similar to a natural family, where everyone participates concretely in the care of the members of the Family/Body.

The goal of our enemy is to keep us from being closely connected, so that the sickness of sin affecting us (e.g., worldly lifestyle, the filth of the internet...) is not seen, so that no one may take care of us to be healed.

He does everything he can to ensure our relationships are not close, but only superficial, so we never truly know each other's struggles. As a result, the **practice of the Body's laws – watchfulness, rebuke, discipline, submission** – is reduced to almost nothing.

We must understand that any attempt on our part to replace the real life of the Body with various activities – worship programs, social events, youth meetings, picnics, choirs – will only give us a form of godliness. (For men shall be lovers of their own selves... having a form of godliness. 2 Timothy 3:2, 5)

If we look around us, it's clear that the enemy has done his work well. In most churches today, people are scattered, coming only to a religious program. Each lives for himself, concerned only with personal problems, with no interest in living for the benefit of others. Whoever will look more closely will easily see that that the phenomenon of the scattered flock is manifested almost everywhere...

It cannot be said today that the Church is closely joined and well-knit. If a member suffers from a spiritual illness, no member – or almost no member is interested in knowing his illness, and no one suffers with or cares for him.

Through this model of organization and worship, Satan has dealt a death blow to many. The structure of two or three worship programs per week was designed in such a way that no one would even think the members need to participate in the real life of the Body by bearing one another's burdens.

It can be easily observed that wherever this model – based on worship programs – is implemented, there are crowds of souls/members who are merely consumers of these programs, with no one caring for them, and no one holding them accountable.

Against this backdrop of scattered flocks, many have come to no longer understand the importance of the Body of Christ, allowing themselves to be absent from the assembly for months or years – many of them having left for various parts of the world in search of earthly things.

Yet they remain on the membership list, without being sought after or even asked where they are. (*...they are scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them.* Ezekiel 34:6)

This happens because most of us disregard the Word of the Lord, which commands us to watch over one another and not to abandon the Body of Christ. (And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is. Hebrews 10:24, 25)

Another trick that contributes to the foundation of the scattered flock is the promotion of the teaching that in the Body of Christ/the Church, the tares dwell together with the wheat, light with darkness – a teaching that is now widespread and has taken hold of many.

Through this counterfeit teaching, the Lord's instruction is disregarded – His teaching that the children of light cannot dwell together with the children of darkness. Likewise, the teaching of the Lord Jesus says that the tares are sown in the field, which is the world. The field is the world – not the Body of Christ!

In the body of Christ, there is no tare; in His Body, there are no dead members. (**The field is the world**. Matthew 13:38; What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? 2 Corinthians 6:14, 15)

Even though the Scripture warns that a little leaven leavens the whole lump, most have chosen to disregard this truth.

The fruit of this teaching is the tolerance of sin – the leaven that leavens the whole lump, bringing death upon the flock. (Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 1 Corinthians 5:6) By accepting this teaching, brotherly submission, rebuke, and discipline are rendered meaningless.

If we look at the teaching of the Old Testament, it is just as strict as that of the New Testament. (There shall not be found among you any man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away today from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations: there shall not be among you any root that beareth gall and wormwood. Deuteronomy 29:18)

Through this teaching, the destructive heresy is secretly introduced, disregarding the Scripture's command to watch that no one in the Body of Christ is worldly. (Looking diligently lest any man be any… profane person. Hebrews 12:16)

Questions:

– Can we truly belong to the Lord if we are members of a scattered assembly where the law of Christ is disregarded and not kept? (Bear ye one another's burdens... Galatians 6:2)

– If we are absent from the assembly for a month, two... does anyone notice? Does anyone look for us? Or does no one even realize we're gone? (My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. Ezekiel 34:6)

The Consequences of Disregarding Christ's Teachings

To avoid being deceived, it is imperative to examine the signs by which we can distinguish a living Church – one cared for by Christ – from a dead one, where

Christ is not involved in the growth of its members. (For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. Ephesians 5:29)

It is of vital importance to know what kind of assembly we belong to, because our salvation will depend on it. Only in the Body of Christ is there real life, where we grow as disciples of Christ through what every joint supplies, until we reach the fullness of His stature.

The Scripture warns us of the danger we are in and tells us to beware of people and/or assemblies that claim to be of God but in reality are not. (Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing. Matthew 7:15)

It is necessary to carefully examine whether the assembly we belong to bears the characteristics of the Body of Christ – or not.

When it comes to the human body, it is quite simple: the life of a member is entirely dependent on the life of the body. We all know that when a person is dead, all the members of their body are dead.

There does not exist a dead body with living members, nor a living body with dead members. If, in a living body, a member dies and is not removed in time, it will cause the whole body to become gangrenous. The same is true for the spiritual body. A Church/body where sin is tolerated has no life, because Christ does not tolerate filth in His Body. (He (Satan) hath no part in Me. John 14:30)

We warn: do not be deceived into thinking you can remain in a dead assembly where sin is tolerated in order to be a light there, because there does not exist a dead body with living members. A member is connected to other members from whom it must receive and to whom it must give. If there were dead members in the body, what will they give to the living members – and what will the living ones give to the dead?

The Scripture clearly states that if someone does not have the teaching of Christ, they are spiritually dead – they do not have life from God. That someone may be a person or an assembly. They cannot have life, because life comes only from Christ. (Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. 2 John 1:9; The Son quickeneth whom he will. John 5:21)

Do not be deceived! If in the Body of Christ (the Church) a member dies and is not removed in time, it will infect and rot the whole body! (Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. 1 Corinthians 5:6; see the case of the church in Thyatira, where the Lord Jesus says He will strike her children dead...)

The Teaching of Christ

One of the signs by which we can verify whether a Church truly belongs to Christ is the doctrine/teaching it accepts and practices.

When a Church does not have the teaching of Christ, it essentially disregards

Christ Himself, refusing His lordship. (He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings. John 14:24; He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 1 John 2:4)

Therefore, it is extremely important to examine whether the teachings of the Lord Jesus are being ignored, disregarded and not practiced.

These teachings are meant to restore the image of God in us, so that we may dwell for eternity with the saints – those who are conformed to the image of His Son, people of God's household. (Ephesians 2:19)

It is essential to understand that all the Lord's commands by which we need to live are a faithful image of His character, His way of being; they show us how He lived, they reveal to us His ways. All of His commands – absolutely all – represent Him.

This is why we cannot neglect any command, because the traits of the Lord are found in His commands. In each of His teachings, a trait of the Lord is hidden. Just as in the human embryo all the traits of the one who is to be born are hidden, so are the traits of the Lord Jesus hidden in the seed of God. (The seed is the word of God. Luke 8:11)

The Holy Spirit uses these commands and works with us to transform us into the image of the Lord. (But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. 2 Corinthians 3:18)

One example is the Lord's teachings on non-resistance. (But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. Matthew 5:39-40; Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again. Luke 6:30)

Only by keeping these words, which teach us not to resist the one who does us harm, will patience, long-suffering, kindness begin to bear fruit in us. These are character traits of the new man, which resemble those of the Lord. (The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy. Psalms 145:8)

It can easily be observed that the Church/denomination that disregards Christ and does not remain in this teaching of His, will approve the enlistment of its members in institutions that practice resistance and oath-taking (e.g. military, police, gendarmerie, security services, etc.) as well as to the defense and pursuit of rights through means provided by the secular world. (e.g. legal action for reclaiming buildings, land, etc.)

Reality shows us that many assemblies belonging to various religious movements find themselves in this situation today. Many are or have been involved in lawsuits over their properties or rights.

Through these actions, they gave approval for their members to act the same

way when dealing with others, and in doing so, they encourage the neglect of the Lord's teachings that lead to the formation of Christ's image in man.

The Body of Christ

Another sign by which we can verify whether a Church has Christ as its head is the teaching and practice regarding the relationships between the members of the Body of Christ.

1. The scattered flock An assembly that disregards and does not practice the teaching of a closely joined, well-knit body – where each member must fulfill the role given by God for the spiritual benefit of the others – does not have Christ. (From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4:16)

2. In such assemblies, God has been set aside, not being allowed to form the body and to place the members in it as He wills. (But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 1 Corinthians 12:18) There are many souls in these assemblies who are not cared for, who are not held accountable, where submission, rebuke, and discipline are not practiced.

If the Church **does not watch and verify** whether the members seek the benefit of the other members, that assembly does not have Christ. (Let no man seek his own, but every man another's wealth. 1 Corinthians 10:24)

Where there is a living Church, the members care for one another. (That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; 1 Corinthians 12:24-26)

Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it

You can do a test in your assembly: If a member suffers from a spiritual or physical illness, how many members care for him? None, one or two, or all?

An assembly that is structured and organized in such a way that it only requires its members to attend worship 2-3 times a week does not have Christ as its head. Where the vast majority of members are merely consumers of religious programs, that assembly is not Christ's.

Through this kind of organization, members are not called to participate in the life of the body/family – to live for the benefit of the other members. Instead, it promotes self-love, where each is focused on their own concerns and personal interests.

3. Brotherly submission Another sign by which we can verify whether a Church has Christ as its head is the acceptance and practice of the teachings regarding brotherly submission. (Obey them that have the rule over you, and

submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account. Hebrews 13:17; Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. 1 Peter 5:5)

We can verify: If the Church belongs to Christ, the members live in submission to Christ and to their spiritual fathers. (Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Ephesians 5:21)

If the Church belongs to Christ, it will practice discipline toward those who, out of pride, do not submit to the elders of the assembly. (And if he shall neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. Matthew 18:17).

It can be easily observed that where the phenomenon of the scattered flock exists, those in authority do not demand submission. (Submission has no object – it cannot be practiced).

4. The Purity of the Church Another sign by which we can verify whether a Church has Christ as its head is the teaching regarding the purity of the Church.

An assembly that disregards and does not uphold the teaching that we must watch to ensure no one among us is worldly is, in practice, disregarding Christ and His Body. (...*lest there be any* fornicator, or profane person… looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God. Hebrews 12:15,16)

It can also be verified whether rebuke and discipline are disregarded and not practiced. (Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, **go and tell** him his fault… but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an **heathen man** and a publican. Matthew 18:15, 17)

You may further verify whether the Church you belong to promotes the teaching that in the Church – the Body of Christ – there are both children of light/wheat and children of darkness/tares.

Through this, the teaching of the Lord is disregarded – His clear teaching that children of light cannot dwell together with children of darkness, and that the tares are sown in the field, which is the world, and not the Church! (What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? 2 Corinthians 6:14, 15; **The field is the world**. Matthew 13:38)

The fruit of this teaching is the toleration of sin – the leaven that leavens the whole lump, bringing death to the flock. (Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? 1 Corinthians 5:6)

Questions for Self-Reflection

If we are in an assembly where the vast majority of members are merely consumers of religious programs, let us ask ourselves:

Is this how the Lord intended it – to be just an institution where parishioners gather, most of them being only consumers, having no role, no responsibility? Can we have life from Christ in a church where the members are not closely joined?

Can we have life in an assembly where brothers do not care for one another or one another's burdens, where the law of Christ is not fulfilled? (Galatians 6:2) Is God involved in any way, where His teachings are ignored and disregarded?

Can the body be alive if it does not receive commands from Christ? If the assembly does not submit to Christ, can there be living members in that body? Perhaps many of us say that God has His children even in assemblies that disregard the lordship of Christ. Can such a claim be supported biblically?

So that you may verify whether your Church ignores and does not practice the Lord's teachings, we are to list a few of them:

1. But I say unto you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. (Matthew 5:39)

2. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also... (Matthew 5:40)

3. Bear ye one another's burdens. (Galatians 6:2)

4. Look diligently lest any man be worldly or profane. (Hebrews 12:15)

5. Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones... (Matthew 18:10) But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of... or is a… reviler. (1 Corinthians 5:11)

6. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. (1 Corinthians 14:34, 35) But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. 1 Timothy 2:12)

7. Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's. (Luke 20:25) By this commandment, verify whether untaxed income is permitted, software piracy, bribery...

If you find yourself in a scattered flock that disregards the Lord's teachings and tolerates the worldly, we urge you to examine yourself most seriously before the Lord. (See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. Ephesians 5:15)

Step 1. Examine your life and enter into obedience to everything the Lord says, so that you will not be destroyed. (Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be **destroyed** from among the people. Acts 3:22, 23)

Step 2. Take heed to what the Lord says and do not associate with those who ignore His teachings, the teaching of Christ. (Whosoever transgresseth, and

abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: **For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds**. 2 John 1:10-11)

Trust in the Lord, who tells you that light cannot dwell with darkness, and do not be unequally yoked together with the unfaithful. (Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and **what communion hath light with darkness?** 2 Corinthians 6:14) Heed the Lord's warning and keep what He says: Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and **touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you**, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. (2 Corinthians 6:17-18) Stop building with those who serve other gods! (See Ezra 4:1-5)

Step 3. Fulfill the command: Flee also youthful lusts: but **follow** righteousness, faith, love, peace, **with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart**. (2 Timothy 2:22) Seek people with a pure heart, and the Lord will bring them into your path! (Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find. Matthew 7:7; **Those that seek me early shall find me**. Proverbs 8:17) The Lord is faithful and will do His part. (I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. Hebrews 13:5)

Flee from the scattered flock. Do not seek assemblies with religious programs, but seek the Body of Christ – closely joined, well-knit – where He is Lord and where His teachings are kept. Only in His Body can one grow in a healthy way; here you are protected from the ravenous wolves. (From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. Ephesians 4:16)

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Perhaps until now, like many others, you haven't been involved in the Church where you are a member, and you haven't considered that each member is placed by God in the Body to serve and benefit the others. (But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. 1 Corinthians 12:7)

It may have seemed normal to you that only a small group of brothers are involved in the Church. Maybe it even feels natural that many in the assembly don't attend service for months or even years, yet still remain on the membership list.

To avoid being deceived, now more than ever, it is imperative to carefully examine what the Word of God says about the role we are meant to have in the Church of Christ.

ISBN 978-615-82447-6-3